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Estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council: Office of the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States on the Syrian Crisis and Office of the Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan

Twenty-fifth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013

I. Introduction

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council (A/66/354/Add.7). The report contains the proposed resource requirements for 2012 for the Office of the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States on the Syrian Crisis and the Office of the Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan. During its consideration of the report, the Advisory Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information and clarification.

2. The Advisory Committee recalls that the General Assembly, in its resolution 66/247, approved the total amount of $583,383,800 for the budgets of the 29 special political missions authorized by the Assembly and/or the Security Council and also approved a charge totalling $583,383,800 net against the provision for special political missions requested in section 3, Political affairs, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013, amounting to a total of $1,083,036,300 for the biennium (see A/66/6 (Sect. 3), para. 3.70).

3. The proposal of the Secretary-General for action to be taken by the General Assembly in connection with the Office of the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States on the Syrian Crisis and the Office of the

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Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan is set out in paragraph 35 of his report (A/66/354/Add.7). The comments and recommendations of the Advisory Committee relating to the requirements for the two special political missions are set out below.

II. Office of the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States on the Syrian Crisis

4. By its resolution 66/253, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General and all relevant United Nations bodies to support the efforts of the League of Arab States, both through good offices aimed at promoting a peaceful solution to the Syrian crisis, including through the appointment of a special envoy, and through technical and material assistance, in consultation with the League. On 23 February 2012, the Secretaries-General of the United Nations and the League of Arab States announced the appointment of Kofi Annan as the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States on the Syrian Crisis. The Office of the Joint Special Envoy is currently being established in Geneva (see A/66/354/Add.7, para. 7). The Advisory Committee was informed that the Office would be located at the United Nations Office at Geneva, which would ensure the security of the Office and result in savings, including for rental costs. **The Committee welcomes these arrangements.**

5. The Secretary-General indicates that the primary task of the Joint Special Envoy is, through his good offices, to search for a solution to the Syrian crisis. While the Office is dealing primarily with political issues, the Envoy will draw on expertise from across the United Nations system through an inter-agency task force co-chaired by the Department of Political Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) that aims to bring all relevant United Nations entities under one umbrella in the effort to resolve the crisis. Administrative support and premises for the Office of the Joint Special Envoy are provided by the United Nations Office at Geneva (see A/66/354/Add.7, para. 10).

6. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the receipt by the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator in the Syrian Arab Republic of briefings on political or other developments by the Joint Special Envoy or any other official of the United Nations system did not alter the nature of the role or functions of the Coordinator. On the contrary, to enable them to carry out their operational activities for development, Resident/Humanitarian Coordinators and country teams expect to be briefed on the activities and mandates of the United Nations system in the country and to draw on the support and guidance of the entire United Nations family (see A/66/354/Add.7, para 8 (c)). Thus, such briefings are not unusual. The Committee was further informed that the status and the privileges and immunities of the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator were unaffected and would continue to be governed by the Charter of the United Nations, the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations (to which the Syrian Arab Republic has been a party since 1953) and the UNDP Standard Basic Assistance Agreement concluded with the Syrian Arab Republic in 1981. **The Advisory Committee requests that the respective roles and functions of the different entities be further clarified in any future budget submission.**

7. The Secretary-General reported that the key staff of the Joint Special Envoy had been recruited in March 2012 and that the Department of Political Affairs had assigned two officers to provide immediate support to him (see A/66/354/Add.7, para. 11). **The Advisory Committee welcomes the steps taken to ensure the rapid start-up of the Office.**

8. Planning assumptions are provided in paragraphs 12 and 13 of the report. It is indicated that the effective discharge of the activities of the Joint Special Envoy will require international staff to support his Office, to liaise with all relevant actors and to manage the day-to-day activities. The staff will have an official base in Geneva and will travel regularly to the field to coordinate with relevant actors. Other assumptions are that security conditions will allow for the continuation of the operations of the Office of the Joint Special Envoy on the ground and that relevant stakeholders will continue to support his efforts.

9. The expected accomplishments of the special political mission are described as follows: cessation of violence by all sides throughout the Syrian Arab Republic; an inclusive Syrian-led political process conducted in an environment free from violence, fear, intimidation and extremism, aimed at effectively addressing the legitimate aspirations and concerns of the Syrian people, without prejudging the outcome; cessation of human rights violations; and facilitation of the provision of humanitarian access to affected areas.

10. The total proposed resource requirements for the Office for the 10-month period ending 31 December 2012 amount to $7,488,000 net ($7,932,200 gross), which includes salaries and common staff costs for 18 positions ($3,022,300) as well as operational costs ($4,465,700), comprising consultancies ($165,700), official travel ($1,590,500), facilities and infrastructure ($578,400), ground transportation ($100,200), air transportation ($750,000), communications ($94,800), information technology ($135,700) and other supplies, services and equipment ($1,050,400). Of the non-post items, a total of $111,800 relates to one-time expenditures for the refurbishment of office space ($30,000) and for the provision of information technology and other equipment ($81,800). The Secretary-General explains that resource requirements for the entire 10-month period are being requested because the initial resource requirements for the Office were funded through the unforeseen and extraordinary expenditures mechanism of the Secretary-General, which was intended as a bridging mechanism (see A/66/354/Add.7, paras. 16 and 17).

11. Paragraph 18 of the report indicates that extrabudgetary resources have been allocated for three Political Affairs Officers (P-5, P-4, P-3) for six months to provide backstopping within the Department of Political Affairs and for a general temporary assistance position for a Senior Adviser for three months, based in Geneva. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the extrabudgetary resources for the three Political Affairs Officers were provided under the emergency window of the multi-year appeal of the Department of Political Affairs, which is funded through voluntary contributions.

12. The supplementary information provided to the Advisory Committee includes a description of the proposed 18 positions and their functions. They comprise the Joint Special Envoy (Under-Secretary-General), two Deputy Joint Special Envoys (Assistant Secretary-General), one Chief of Office (D-2), one Director of Communications/Spokesperson (D-2), two Senior Political Officers (P-5), one Senior Administrative Officer (P-5), three Political Affairs Officers (2 P-4, 1 P-3), one

Public Information Officer (P-3), one Personal Assistant (General Service (Principal level)), one Administrative Assistant (General Service (Principal level)), three Team Assistants (General Service (Other level)) and one Security Officer (General Service (Other level)). The organization chart of the Office is annexed to the report of the Secretary-General. The Committee was informed that the Joint Special Envoy was on a $1-per-year contract. In paragraph 20 of the report, the Secretary-General states that expertise would also be made available from the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to complement the Joint Special Envoy's team as and when required. **The Committee welcomes the lean structure of the Office and encourages it to maintain a small structure.**

13. **The Advisory Committee recommends the approval of the proposed budget in the amount of $7,488,000 net for the Office of the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States on the Syrian Crisis and the approval of a charge totalling $7,488,000 net against the provision for special political missions for the biennium 2012-2013.**

III. Office of the Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan

14. Following an exchange of letters between the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council in July 2011 (S/2011/474 and S/2011/475), the Office of the Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan was established, subsequent to the expiration of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS), to continue to support the establishment and maintenance of good relations between the Sudan and South Sudan on behalf of the Secretary-General. Under the leadership of the Special Envoy, who was appointed on 1 August 2011, the Office is mandated to assist the parties to: (a) agree on modalities for the implementation of outstanding Comprehensive Peace Agreement benchmarks; and (b) agree on key post separation arrangements critical for the establishment of good-neighbourly relations between the two countries. To that end, the Office will work closely with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA).

15. The estimated resource requirements for the Office of the Special Envoy for 2012 amount to $1,283,200 net ($1,386,400 gross). The requirements include salaries and common staff costs for seven positions ($949,900); travel of staff ($251,500); facilities and infrastructure ($77,700); and communications ($4,500). The Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the staffing complement for the Special Envoy had initially comprised four positions. It was indicated, however, that the practical experience and the evolution of events had determined that support for the activities of the Special Envoy needed to be strengthened, particularly with regard to activities outside of the Sudan and South Sudan. Details of the proposed staffing complement of seven positions are provided in the table following paragraph 33 of the report of the Secretary-General.

16. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraphs 26 and 27 of the report that, although he will be based in New York, the work of the Special Envoy will involve extensive negotiations and consultations with various partners in Addis Ababa, Khartoum and Juba. In the results-based-budgeting framework it is indicated that

the work of the Office will involve daily engagement and consultations with the authorities of the Sudan and South Sudan and other relevant parties on all issues in connection with the peace consolidation process at both the senior and working levels. Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that although much of the Special Envoy's work would involve interacting with Government officials in Addis Ababa, Khartoum and Juba, it was critical for key Member States, the Security Council and other influential stakeholders, including the Secretary-General, to have access to him in New York. It was further indicated that in New York the Special Envoy could develop and obtain support for proposals that he could take to the parties when meeting with them. **While the Committee does not object to the Secretary-General's proposal to locate the Special Envoy in New York, it is of the view that locating him in the region would bring him in closer contact with his interlocutors and could generate savings under common staff costs and official travel and from not having to maintain a full-time office in New York. In addition, the Committee is of the view that sufficient capacity exists within the Secretariat to provide the necessary Headquarters support to the Office. In that regard, the Committee recommends that the location of the Special Envoy be kept under review.**

17. The Advisory Committee notes from the supplementary information provided to it that the Senior Adviser at the D-1 level, based in Addis Ababa, would, inter alia, provide analysis on the negotiation process and the political dynamics in the Sudan and South Sudan. Upon enquiry as to whether existing structures in the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Political Affairs might not be adequate to undertake that function, the Committee was informed that the incumbent would be the prime interlocutor on a daily basis with the African Union mediator, Thabo Mbeki, and his team. It was also indicated that the incumbent would supervise the work of the two P-4 level staff in Khartoum and Juba and provide advice and analysis to the Special Envoy that was very specific to the negotiations on the Sudan and South Sudan. It was further indicated that the incumbent's intimate knowledge of the subject matter and the key players involved was essential for the high-level work of the Special Envoy.

18. Upon enquiry, with regard to the roles of the two P-4 positions of Political Affairs Officers based in Juba and Khartoum, the Advisory Committee was informed that the functions of such staff in the Office of the Special Envoy differed from those in other peacekeeping operations, as their mandates were very specific to the Sudan and South Sudan, respectively. It was further indicated that interacting with the working-level representatives of the two negotiating teams were full-time functions that were very distinct from the implementation of the peacekeeping mandates of UNMISS, UNAMID and UNISFA, even though those missions are situated in the same two countries.

19. **Taking into account its comments and recommendations in the preceding paragraphs, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly approve the budget for the Office of the Special Envoy for 2012 in the amount of $1,283,200. In addition, the Committee recommends the approval of a charge totalling $1,283,200 against the provision for special political missions for the biennium 2012-2013.**

IV. Recommendation

20. The Secretary-General's proposal for action to be taken by the General Assembly is set out in paragraph 35 of his report. **In the light of paragraphs 13 and 19 above, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly:**

(a) **Approve the budgets in the total amount of $8,771,200 net for the Office of the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States on the Syrian Crisis and the Office of the Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan;**

(b) **Approve a charge totalling $8,771,200 net against the provision for special political missions for the biennium 2012-2013.**